

MINUTES



**Commissioners of
St Michaels
Meeting Minutes - Working and Legislative Session
Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm
St. Michaels Branch of the Talbot Co. Library
106 S. Fremont Street
St. Michaels, MD 21663**

1. 6:00 pm - Call to Order for Working Session - Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Breimhurst, President, called to order a live and remote Working Session of the Commissioners of St. Michaels at 6:00 p.m. in St. Michaels, Maryland and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Present at the meeting were Commissioners Joyce Harrod, Al Mercier, Tad DuPont and Katrina Whittington. Other Representatives included Town Administrator Rob Straebel, Town Clerk Vickie Sharp and Chief Oswald. With approximately 30 members of the public and Zoom present as well.

2. Announcements from COSM and Staff

Amendments were added to the agenda, under Consent Agenda item 5A the October 25, 2023 meeting minutes were added. Under 5B Events, the event permit for the Christmas in St. Michaels Parade and CBMM welcome center opening.

Commissioner Harrod attended the Economic Symposium with keynote speaker Anirban Basu and Luke Tilley event was well attended and provide information about what was going on now and some of what will happen in the future with the towns in Talbot County. Commissioner Harrod asked for a moment of silence in honor of retired Officer Charles Lewis who passed away and had served the Town of St. Michaels during the 90's.

Commissioner duPont asked that the Planning Commission put on their docket to start thinking about banks of electric car charges. A electric car charge has appeared on St. Mary's Square, they don't have a driveway but have done a good job of hiding the charger. The Town needs to start thinking about this and designate certain parking lots and more to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Briemhurst wanted to Thank Mora Macijeski and her volunteers that came through the Town of St. Michaels picking up trash. Thanked the Staff for hosting the Open House at the 201 Boundary Lane. Residences got to view the grounds and tour the building. Rob and Commissioner Briemhurst met with the Department of Transportation Secretary at a symposium in Easton outlining the 6-year comprehensive transportation program, St. Michaels projects are in the plan. We pressed them on making sure the rebuild of the Town sidewalks get done in a timely fashion. The Contractor that originally did the work, improperly installed 45 of the 46 ADA handicap ramps, therefore they all have to be redone. Spoke with Ken Fender, the District Engineer with the State Highway and he assured that the current road would be patched and repaired to be smooth until they can grade and re-pave in the Spring. Sidewalk repairs will be completed next Summer and the paving next Spring.

Rob Straebel reported that there will be a Special Meeting in December to go over the GMB report for the Stormwater Management Plan for the West Harbor Road/East Chew area. This

needs to be finished up before the end of the year. Electronic water bill payments are now available there are fees associated with this process. We are also looking into getting a card swipe in the office as well. There were some comments about the age restriction for Halloween. The current code for Halloween states that only children ages 12 and younger can trick-or-treat. Halloween is to have fun and meet your neighbors, thought is that there should be some changes to the Code going forward. The next Master Plan meeting will be November 15th from 6-8 pm at Parish Hall. Parks and Recreation and Planning Commission will have a joint meeting regarding the Master Plan on December 5th starting at 10:30 am at Parish Hall. They will also tour the property on December 4th from 3-4 pm. There are a number of committee and board appointments that will be expiring by the end of the year. There are 12 different appointments, they are being advertised on the website, constant contact and in the newspaper. There will be a closed session for the December commissioner's meeting to review and make the new appointments. There was a report that some Breezeline cables were improperly installed. Called Breezeline and they came out right away, was poor workmanship, repaired one issue and had to create a work order for the other. Public works crew will be cleaning out the culverts and catch basins that are full of debris and vegetation in the Chester Park and North Street area. Hopefully this will help water flow to get to the ditches. Anticipate a full engineering study to help mitigate some of the flooding issues and standing water that is around for days after a rain fall.

Chief Oswald stated that the police department is down to 4 officers including himself, hopefully will have 6 by the end of the year. Officer Sica, the 5th officer, will be starting his 160 hours of field training. Officer Nepert, the 6th officer, will be starting his 80 hours of field training in early December. There are events coming up that additional manpower will be needed, will reach out to the Sheriff's department for additional help. This year's shop with a Cop will be held at Target. December 7th will be the annual holiday party for the children at the police station, stop by and enjoy.

3. Comments from the Public

Roy Meyers briefed on a grant that will go in before the end of the year. Have been working with Bay Land regarding San Domingo Creek, will be reviewing their draft report. In the report recommends replacing a failing bulkhead at Back Creek Park and putting in a possible tide gate under the current bridge on the nature trail to protect all the streets up north from the bridge. DNR will support a grant to do the final design, permit and construction of the living shoreline. Also, \$20,000 for a feasibility study if we would want to look at a tide gate in that area. Total grant would be somewhere in the \$180,000 to \$200,000, with no matching from the Town.

Karen Wald spoke that she would like to see the new Police Department at the 300 Mill Street property current Town Office and sell the Fremont Property get revenue from the sale.

Kristen Greenaway spoke in regard to the Historic District Residence Association letter to the Town of St. Michaels. She clarified the tax that CBMM pays to the Town and all the free admission and events that are offered by CBMM. She also spoke in regard to the Police Station being at 300 Mill Street, that CBMM is opposed to any Police Station being located on Mill Street.

Eric Bridges spoke in regard to the streets and sidewalks in the Town of St. Michaels and that 45 of the 46 ADA sidewalks are installed improperly. He said that if he gets the job to correct the sidewalks, he will make sure that the Town has minimally traffic delays. Most delays would be on the side streets as that is where he would have his trucks and equipment. Main street needs to be patched and hopefully they get it done by the end of the year. Read Bob Hockaday's letter that was posted on The Talbot Spy in response to the Historic District Residence Association's letter on the agenda.

4. Special Presentation

Representative from Verizon gave a presentation on the utility poles through town. There is a third party that goes around and inspects every pole for Verizon, they are inspected every 10 years. The Inspectors will inspect the pole for decay, strength and measure for defects in the pole, they will determine if it needs to have maintenance or replace the pole. Verizon poles have a pole number associated with them and if one needs to make a report providing the pole number helps identify pole location. Will give an update on the remaining 17 poles that need to be replaced/repared at the December 2023 meeting. Citizens can report poles that they feel are unsafe. Request for listing and/or schematic of all the Verizon poles within the Town of St. Michaels will follow up with the engineers. How many of the poles have obsolete wires on them and are the vendors required to remove unused wires. Have St. Michaels compile a list of poles that are leaning or seem troublesome for Verizon to review. Suggestion to send out a Constant Contact to the Town Citizens to send in information on a pole that is of concern.

Representative, Dan Spiegel from the Historic District Residence Association, spoke regarding facts that have been gathered regarding the tax situation in the Town that is a burden on the Residence. Tourism is the driving force for St. Michaels, cost for dealing with the tourist is on the residence of St. Michaels property taxes. A normal small Town has businesses that cater to non-tourist, most of these types of businesses have left St. Michaels. The current businesses in the Town of St. Michaels need tourism to make them successful. St. Michaels does not have a special tax charged to businesses who make income from the tourist. Therefore, the businesses and residences of St. Michaels pay the same property tax rate. The Town should open conversation with the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum about paying a PILOT tax. Money generated by the businesses does not stay in St. Michaels, the majority of the businesses in St. Michaels are owned and operated by individuals that do not live in the Town.

5. Consent Agenda for Minutes, and Events

Consent agenda (minutes, event permits and department reports) was approved with a correction to the CBMM Open House event permit, Commissioner Harrod made a motion to accept the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Mercier, was passed on roll call vote 5-0 in favor.

6. Commission Appointment

Rob Straebel, Town Administrator was appointed to the Talbot County Economic Development Commission. Commissioner duPont made a motion to accept the appointment, seconded by Commissioner Harrod, was passed on roll call vote 5-0 in favor.

7. Old Business

Members of the St. Michaels Business Association came forward to introduce their ideas on jump starting the tourism for St. Michaels. Terry Knopp owner of Foxy's stated she has acquired St. Michaels Tourism, and her vision is to have one voice for St. Michaels Tourism. They are currently updating the website, walking map and building an app that will be used with one's smart phone.

Discussion regarding the future location of the Police Department, expansion options for 300 Mill Street are limited. Could this building be sold along with the Fremont lots and use the money for renovations to 100 Fremont Street. Before any renovations are done at the current Police Department location all options need to be reviewed. An email has been sent and awaiting a response from the DNR in reference to the 300 Mill Street property that once the Town moves out what can be done with the building/property as it was purchased by the Town with open space grant funds. This discussion will stay open until we hear back from the DNR.

8. New Business

The Mediation Agreement with Mid-Shore Mediation and St. Michaels Police Department was

approved as submitted. Commissioner Mercier made a motion to accept the agreement, seconded by Commissioner Whittington, was passed on roll call vote 5-0 in favor.

RFP for interior/exterior painting of the garage and administrative building at the old Environmental Concern Building has been drafted and would like approval to move forward for pricing. With adjustments made to the RFP, was approved to put the RFP out for pricing.

Tim Crosby presented proposals to provide architectural and engineering design and construction services to; incorporate drainage in tow jail cells/renovate bathroom to be ADA compliant; and complete bathroom upgrade to be ADA compliant at the New Town Office (former Environmental Concern Administration Office). Stamped documents are required to apply for permit to proceed with upgrades. Concern over price for this process was brought forward, agreed to get other pricing for these documents.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has requested enlarging the board members from 5 to 7 members. They need more helping hands so the Commissioners agreed to start the process for this increase by changing the Ordinance. Commissioner duPont made a motion to add 2 more members, seconded by Commissioner Mercier, was passed on roll call vote 5-0 in favor.

9. Comments from the Public

Aida Khalil stated Choptank Electric replaced 2 poles on Trusty Street. Do not to spend any more money on the old Police Station until it is known where the new Police Station will be located.

Mark Berman stated against spending any further funds for architectural fee on the Police Station until it is known where the Police Station will be. Commented as well on the property tax issue within the town.

John Marrah spoke about fairness regarding the right to vote in the Town if you pay town taxes. He highlighted that the new app that is being designed by the St. Michaels Tourism is a great idea and would benefit the community as a whole.

John Novak spoke regarding the right to vote in town as well. Is not in favor of using public funds to fund the new marketing app.

Debra Alms spoke regarding the St. Michaels Business Association that they are elections coming.

Keri Bridges from the Preppy Redneck, can not have a fraction of the Town speaking for the whole Town.

10. Comments from the Commissioners

No comments

11. Announcement of Future Meetings - to be held at Library

November 10, 2023 - Veterans Day - Town Office Closed

November 22, 2023 - No Meeting Due to Holidays

November 23, 2023 - Thanksgiving - Town Office Closed

November 24, 2023 - American Indian Heritage Day - Town Office Closed

December 13, 2023 - Working Session

December 25, 2023 - Christmas Day - Town Office Closed

December 27, 2023 - No Meeting Due to Holidays

12. Adjournment of Open Session

Meeting adjourned at 8:07pm

Public Participation: All comments from the public will be taken during the period set aside for "Comments from the Public." The "Comments from the Public" portion of the Commission agenda shall have a limited time period as determined by the Commissioners, and shall be at the beginning and at the end of each agenda. To be recognized, a member of the public should raise his or her hand and wait to be recognized by the President. Comments and questions should be kept brief and to the point, and be directed to the President.